



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to Statement by Belarus Regarding Peaceful Assembly in the United States and the EU**

As delivered by Political Counselor Christopher Robinson  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
October 27, 2011

We take note of the question posed by the Belarusian delegation October 20 regarding the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations continuing to take place across the United States and in many parts of the world.

We note that these demonstrations have shown in practice our respect for the universal right of the people to join together peacefully in order to voice their common concerns in exercise of their freedoms of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly, consistent with the rights guaranteed them by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

While there have been isolated instances of violence, the demonstrations in the United States have been for the most part peaceful. The United States values the rights of these and any demonstrators who seek to exercise their rights to free speech and assembly without regard to the content of that speech. Should violence erupt, however, law enforcement has an obligation to intervene. At the same time, any allegations of excessive force would be subject to review and investigation.

In reaffirming our respect for freedoms of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly, we note the stark contrast between the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations, which have reaffirmed the right to political expression, and the regrettable situation in Belarus, in which political prisoners have been imprisoned and mistreated because of their beliefs.

The United States once again calls on Belarus to release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally, to include the full rehabilitation of their civil and political rights. The United States also continues to call for an end to the campaign of harassment against those who criticize the government.

In concert with our European partners, the United States will continue to hold accountable those Belarusian officials responsible for repressive actions through targeted sanctions. At the same time, we remain committed to supporting the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.